

Papered March 2^d 1829

University of Pennsylvania

March 4th 1829.

Morton Weaver.

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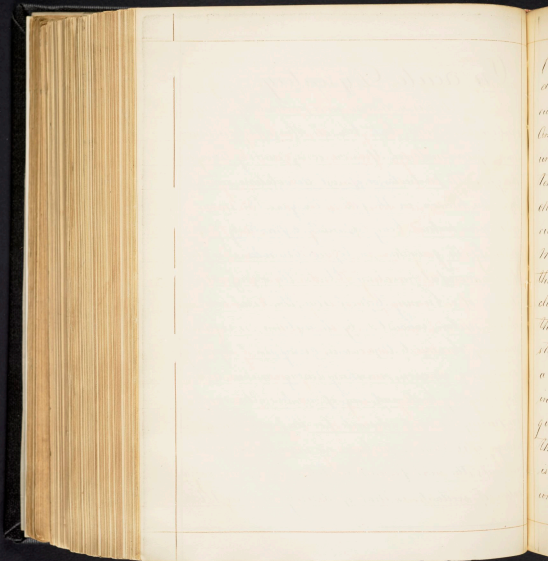
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On acute Dysentery.

This is a disease, more particularly, of the Autumnal months; but, like all other affections, unconfined by circumstances, Sporadic cases, occurring throughout the year. Its particular, or special devastations, manifest themselves, however, in the fall of the year. The season of the year, indeed, being especially, & frequently, propitious, for its generation in tropical climates, it is also of more manifest prevalence. Under the oppressive influence, of a burning tropical sun, the vital energies of the system, exhausted, by its influence, is rendered peculiarly obnoxious to these causes, giving rise to Dysentery. In military excursions, marching through countries, abounding in sultry heats, and crops of moisture, this combination furnishing the most adequate, for the production of Dysentery. All diseases perhaps, are maintained by excitement; the most favourable state of the system, for the action of excitants, is that of debility; were we to look,



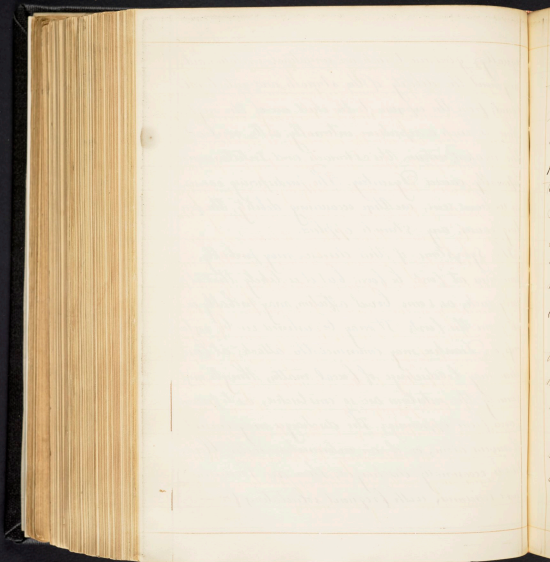
for debility, in the case before us, we should without
difficulty discover, that, these very causes, every way cal-
culated for its production, had been exerting their influence.
And, moreover, that the system was, actually labouring,
under great debility. Great heat applied to the sys-
tem, provokes to action, perhaps, more than any other
other stimulant, we know, likewise, that an unac-
customed stimulant, is less easily borne. In these
Military campaigns, which have been conducive, to
these remarks, the Soldier, translated from a cold
climate, to a scorching sun, they have laboured under,
the double detriment, of an unaccustomed excessive
stimulant, which prostrates the vital energies, to such
a degree, as to cause direct debility. Poured manna,
in sultry climes, by opening the skins of the skin,
gives rise, to such a profuse discharge, as to make,
the system sink under debility. Food then admin-
istered, of a kind, incompatible with this debility,
which, it is supposed, at present affects the system-

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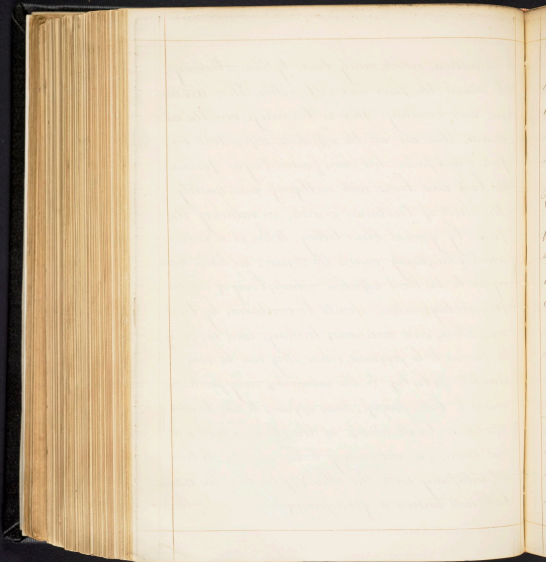
equally, gives rise to such an unnatural irritation, as to
augment the debility of the stomach and intestinal
canals; from the exposure to the chill air of the night,
there is, such a repulsion internally, as to, overload
the weaker, interior, the Stomach and Intestines more
especially, causes Dysentery. The predisposing causes,
as we have seen, are those occasioning debility, the exci-
ting causes, any stimuli applied.

The symptoms of this disease, may probably,
sometimes at first, be fewer; but it is likely that it is
rarely such, as, some local affection, may probably ex-
ist from the first; It may be ushered in by consti-
pations, or, Diarrhoea may commence the attack; at first
there may be discharge of faecal matter, though, most
generally the intestines are so constricted, as to prevent
faeces from appearing; The discharges may consist
of mucus alone, or of an intermixture with blood;
pus is occasionally discharged. This are *Terrina-*
and Tenismus, with frequent solicitations for —



evacuations, which merely tend, by their straining, to increase the pain and inflammation. There are nausea and vomiting. There is tenderness over the abdomen, there are all the effects, dependent on fever, quick pulse, hot skin, fixed tongue, pain in the back and loins, with restlessness and anxiety.

The mode of treatment consists, in reducing the fever, by general blood letting; When it is reduced which alone, rarely arrests the disease, we then have regard to the local affection, which, being of an inflammatory nature, should be combated, by local evacuations, and revulsives; leeching, and cupping, the former to be preferred, when they can be employed. Blister to the extremities may perhaps, answer a better purpose, than applied to the tender abdomen. Counterirritants, if the stomach will admit them, for determining to the surface; When not interfering with the other applications, the warm bath will answer a good purpose.



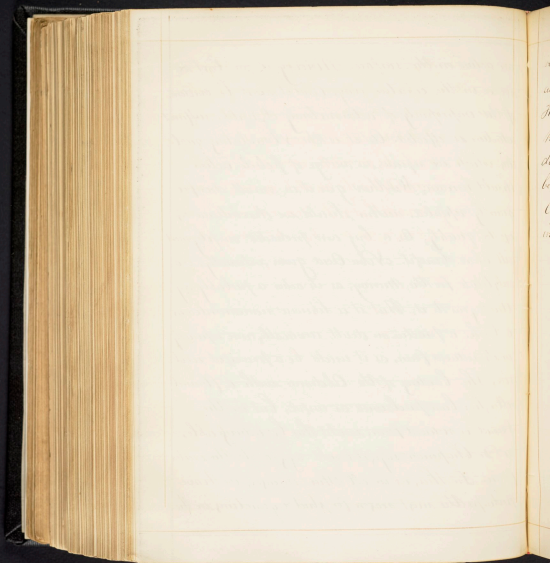
I have yet said nothing of purgatives; It is evident that if at all allowable, they must be of the mildest kind; As those, any wise harsh in their operation, are quite inadmissible; As they would augment the inflammation of the intestines; Castor oil may be given by the mouth, and mild injections by the Anus. Emetics for this latter purpose are to be preferred when the system is reduced sufficiently, we must endeavour to calm the stomach, and therefore, as they exert a very unfavorable influence, on the disease. Perhaps the only means to assist them, is by appropriate doses of Opium, or Slandanum, they should be given to produce the desired effect; if timidly given they serve but to aggravate the disease.

The diet must be accommodated to the state of the system, of the mildest and least stimulating kind, as the irritation, is transmitted, direct to the intestines, from an irritated Stomach. The clothing should be, rather, warm, than cold, to maintain con-

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an action on the surface. Mercury is our last re-
source in the curative way, and it must be evident
of the impropriety of administering it, until, sufficient
reduction is effected. As it is the Stimulating qual-
ities which are required, an overtype of febrile action
should remain; We then give it in small doses fre-
quently repeated, neither should we discontinue its
use too quickly; As a long and protracted employment
will alone benefit. Nitric Acid given internally, is a
substitute for the Mercury, as its action is probably very
Analogous to it; But it is likewise recommended as
a Cath. a practice no doubt serviceable, more especially
in its reduced form, as it would be a powerful re-
sive, The binding of the Abdomen with a flannel
roller, has been proclaimed as useful, but in the
Second or reduced form, would this be admissable,
as Dr Chapman says, it would aggravate the excited
form. In this, as in all other diseases, we have
perhaps the most reason for strict injunctions, in the



receptive stage, patients on the whole, to slight the
admonitions of the Physician, and occasion a return.
He should avoid all exposure in inclement weather,
he should not take himself from the house at night,
damp air should be avoided, and the diet should
be strictly accommodated to the state of the disease;
As it may have, at first produced it, so it will,
in all likelihood, reproduce it, if not strictly guarded.

